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A LETTER, directed to the Honourable Robert Harley, Esq; Speaker to the Honourable House of Commons, relating to the great Abuses of the Nation.

SIR,

HAVING such a Worthy Person in the Chair, I thought it not amiss to Inform your Honour of some Ill Practices too common used in this our Age and Nation, hoping the Honourable House will find out ways to suppress it for the future; (*viz.*) I happened last Week in company of one who is now Clerk to a Brewer in this City, who amongst other Discourse, told me that the Brew-house to which he belonged, had several false Backs and Tuns, undiscovered, &c. And that he has paid some Gaugers weekly Wages as duly as any Servant they had, some 10, 20, 30s. per Week; and some of the Gaugers that wou'd not be bribed, they have watched their Beer out of their Brew-house, and finding in near double the quantity by them gauged, have made Complaint, but on Tryal have been cast, by reason the Victuallers where the Beer has been carried in, (being deep in Debt to the Brewer) have sworn that the Barrel came in but half full, and the Gauger not swearing they was full, Might has overcome Right, and the Gaugers became a scoff to all Brewers and False Officers, who ne'er left off False Accusations against them, till they have lifted them out of their places: by which it plainly appears that the Revenue is much lessened, and all honest Men obliged to be False to their Trust, or starve; this I take to be matter of Fact. For my self, sometime since lived with a Brewer, and often when we have brewed twice a Week, the Brewer and Gauger has shared the *Excise* of one Brewing between 'em. But it may be objected, Why did not I Inform, and have the Reward? To which I answer, That I acted for a Friend *gratis*, and to have Informed against him, I shou'd not only been scoffed at, but have hazarded my Life, tho' I had a good-will to it, but was perswaded that if I did, the Gauger wou'd have Murdered me, they being generally made up of Lewd Men, and Soldiers: To prevent which Abuses for the future, I can't think of a better way than Farming the *Excise*, which its thought wou'd be of great Advantage to the Publick; for it plainly appears by what I have inserted, that by the Corruption of the Officers, a one Third Part of the Duty is to the Officers and Brewers, which Inriches them, and Impoverishes our Government; for the Confirmation of which it plainly appears by Loans

given falling short, and the Brewers getting such vast Estates in few Years; and by a Gauger that has but 50*l.* per Annum Sallery, to keep a Houle, Wife, three or four Children, a Man, a Maid, and a Horse to ride a Hunting three or four Days in a Week, as many to my knowledge in that imploy has, and do, having nothing but their bare 50*l.* Sallery; all which is really Matter of Fact.

Likewise, the same Abuses are daily Committed by the Custom-house Officers, which has been a great denyal to Trade, and an encouragement to the Running of Goods: for many a young Merchant has been discouraged in their first on-set of Merchandizing, for I know a young Gentleman of my Acquaintance, that desired to Merchandize, but on his first entring out of Goods, they made him pay 13*s.* for Fees, where he should have paid but 7*s.* 6*d.* And on his Importing his Returns, made him pay more, besides 4*s.* 6*d.* for a little parcel of Goods carrying into the King's Ware-house, and lying there five Houses, on which Abuses he fully resolved, (by the Blessing of God) to keep his Money in his Chest; and live private, he being a Person of great Fortune, and known Principles, that abhors Bribery and Unjust Dealing; tho' the old Merchants are well versed in it; for a Friend of his told him, that if he would give a Fee and a small Treat now and then, he might gain by Merchandizing as well as himself and others, and for want of which skill (as he called it) many a Young Merchant is undone before he has any insight how others get Money; for the Custom Duties, and what they are overcharged, (which they save) is the Breaking of others that pay it; who endeavours to sell after their Prices; which is the Cause, as I said before, that so much Goods are daily Run, and thereby the Duty lessened; for several young Merchants, and Masters of Vessels, think it's by Running of Goods that others get by Trading; whilst they are still in the Dark, and by Running of Goods many a young Trader is undone, tho' the fault lies all the while in perjured Officers. In short, the Ill Practices daily used by the Custom-house Officers is a great Scandal to our Nation, and the Name of the Custom-house of England sinks in all foreign parts. But it may be objected, Why Information or Complaint is not made of these and the like Abuses? To which it's answer'd; as in the Case before, that Might overcomes Right. But put the case a man does make Complaint to the Commissioners, and (by chance) has redress (as a Friend of mine not long since had) but the next time he had Goods on the Wharf, the Officers tumbled and dirted it (under pretence of prohibited Goods put up with it) that he had better give them ten times the Money they over-charged him before; this is matter of Fact, and to prevent the like Abuses for the future, (and discourage the Running of Goods) it's thought it wou'd be much better if it was Farmed out, or that each Officer had a Table hanging over his Head of his Office and particular Fees; as likewise each Officers Fees on each Wharf or Key, or at least those that have Salleries to have no Fees at all; the Wharfs and Keys being maintained out of the publick Stock, &c.

Hear.

Hearing your Honour's have Bills now in the House concerning the Militia, Deputy-Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace, I hope it may not be amiss, if I insert some Corruptions that I have seen and heard of them; and first as to the Militia, one thing would be very needful, that there was a Set-Pay for all Horse and Foot in the Militia, and that each Man and Horse be Lissed, and not altered without the consent of the Deputy-Lieutenants, who should meet four times in the Year for that purpose; and that no Vintner, Innholder, or Victualler, &c. bear any Office in the Militia, for the ill consequence of which plainly appears by the decay of all the *Artillery-Grounds* belonging to this City, for since those Callings are so vastly increased, and so many made Officers, especially in this City, that of latter days, instead of exercising the Pike and Musket in the Field, it's turned into a Bottle and Glas within Doors; and he that can exercise that best, shall have a Commission, and though at the same time he does scarce know a Pike from a Musket, or at least a Fire-Lock from a Match-Lock; this is Matter of Fact; and to prevent which for the future, it would be proper that a Law was made, That no Vintner, Innholder, Victualler, or Coffee-house-keeper, &c. be capable of an Office in the Militia; for its plainly they encourage their Soldiers under them in Vice and Debauchery, instead of Military Discipline: And that no Person be capable of an Office in the Militia of this City and Suburbs, unless he be a Member of one or more of the *Artillery-Gardens* within the same, and has paid — Entrance; and — per Quarter towards the Maintaining of Arms, Ammunition, Servants, &c. and belonging to the same. It would likewise be very necessary, that none be made an Officer but what has been actually a Member 12 Months in one of the said Artillery Gardens; for many by Friendship, or being a good Pot-Companion, are made Officers, altho' they scarce know the Right Hand from the Left, which is a great denyal to Military Discipline, &c.

It would be a great Encouragement of Military Discipline, if there was a Law made for all Youth, in all Cities and Towns; (with leave from the chief Magistrate) to beat Drum and Exercise Arms on *Shrove-Tuesday*, *King's Coronation-Day*, *Fifth of November*, &c. instead of Throwing at Cocks, Ninepinns, Tippling and Drinking, &c. which would much strengthen our Nation against a foreign Enemy, and put a great stop to Vice and Immorality, &c.

And as to Justices of the Peace, and Deputy-Lieutenants, it may be said as before, of Military Officers, he that can Exercise the Bottle and Glas best, &c. shall have a Commission, altho' no parts, Principle, or Estate, worthy of that Honour, and some of them living such Profane, Loose Lives, that instead of working Reformation in others, they encourage Vice and Debauchery. As for Instance, six Men of this City went to *Woolidge*, last Week to see the Royal Sovereign, and some of them being in Drink, and coming home, they pretended themselves Press-Masters, and stop'd all they met, at length the Press-Masters themselves met with them, and would have Press'd them, on which they had hot Words, if not Blows, but as being near *Debsford*, they would go before a Justice of Peace; and

and before a Justice (one Capt. W—) they went, (who was not at home, but at a Tavern) and one of the Company coming before him with his Hat on, the Justice strikes him with his Hand in the Face, and bids him pull off his Hat. He Answered, He would not. On which the Justice swore an Oath or two, and gave him another slap in the Face, which made his Nose bleed; at which the Party swore at the Justice. In short, the Press-Masters not finding they was like to have any good of 'em, swore an Assault against two of them which was Drunk, on which they went their way, the Justice on further Examination, required Money for their Swearing, and being Drunk, (tho' its thought he swore two Oaths to their one) and find Sureties, or to *Maidstone-Goal* they must go; the rest being sober and civil, and all Housekeepers in this City, the Justice (so called) discharged them: However, the four not willing to leave their two Companions, called for Wine, on which the Justice bid 'em sit down in Company with him. So at length, by drinking one Health, and another's Health, they prevailed with the Justice, that their two Companions should be freed, by begging Pardon on their Knees, and pay 5 s. each for Swea'ng and being Drunk: But having a Bottle or two more they prevail'd so far, that by begging Pardon on their Knees, they should be Discharg'd, which they did; and calling for the Reckoning, the Justice paid his 18 d. all They their 12 d. per Man; and it being about 2 or 3 in the Morning, they parted. This Information I had from one of the Company, and I believe it to be all Matter of Fact; and therefore, How is it possible to have any Reformation of Manners in this Nation, unless the Honourable House do Reform these, and the like Crying Sins of our Land? For whilst those in Offices and Places of Trust are so Corrupted. It's no wonder those good and wholesome Laws you make, are no better observ'd and obey'd; neither is it for want of Trade that we Complain so much, but for the ill Government in Trade; for it's thought we have more Money Trade and Business, &c. in this Nation than ever; but for want of good Management as formerly, makes all People uneasy: As for instance, if a Man deals but for the value of one Shilling, it must be Concluded on in a Tavern, Ale-house, or Coffee-house, &c. Where on both sides, in buying and Selling, each Man's profit is gone in Idle Expence; for since we have had so many new sorts of Liquors, and so great a number of Publick-Houses to Trade, in our great Complaint of Trading has been; for a Dealer not only spends his Profit, which should be for the Maintaing of his Family, but loose so much of his precious Time, as in former Days was employ'd in reading the Scriptures, or some other Godly Book: So that it wou'd be necessary, that a Tax was laid on all Publick-Houses; for they at present have the only Trade of this Nation—, or at least make a Law to make all Bargains void, that shall be wholly Contracted at the Hours of *Change*, till near the *Exchange*; for it plainly appears, by what I have inserted, that a Pot-Companoin, in the whole and sole Foundation of all our Corruptions in this our Age & Nation. I could say a great deal more on each Head, but this may give you some Light in these Causes, why Vice and Immorality do so much abound, and our Government continue so in Debt, and why some particular Persons get such vast Estates in so little a Time. Pardon my Boldness, and Excuse me for not Signing my Name, which I wholly omitted, fearing it might be known to some Persons, it was me that madd known their Secrets, and thereby hazard my Life; therefore shall Subscribe my self

England's Well-wisher.

London,

May the 3d. 1701.

